MISTRIAL RULED IN BOWERS CASE

Jury Deadlocked 8-4 in Hattiesburg

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HATTIESBURG, Miss. (AP) — A Forrest County Circuit Court jury reported itself hopelessly deadlocked at 8-4 here Friday night and Judge Stanton Hall declared a mistrial in the state murder trial of former Ku Klux Klan chief Sam Bowers Jr.

The jury had announced an earlier deadlock prior to their supper break, but Judge Hall ordered the eight whites and four Negroes back into deliberation.

Defense attorneys Lawrence Arrington of Hattiesburg and Percy Quinn of Laurel aimed their presentation at discrediting the testimony of several former Klansmen called by the state.

Two employes of a Hattiesburg supermarket told the biracial Circuit Court jury they saw Billy Roy Pitts shopping last January, contradicting earlier testimony by Pitts, a former Klansman who has been the government's star witness in other trials stemming from Dahmer's death.

Other defense witnesses include Travis Buckley, former Jasper County prosecuting attorney, and Robert Larson, who stated Buckley was in Washington, D.C., on the night of Jan. 6, 1966. Pitts testified earlier he saw Buckley in Laurel on that night.

The biggest surprise came near the end of the state's presentation when Robert Earl Wilson, an admitted former Klan officer, was called to the stand. Wilson told the court he saw Bowers about five days after the fatal attack and the former Klan imperial wizard was "jubilant" over Dahmer's death.

Wilson said they met at the Jackson home of Burris Dunn Jr., whom he identified as the head of the Klan unit to which he (Wilson) belonged.

He said Bowers, who was to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee at Washington a short time later, asked Dunn: "Well, what do you think of what my boys did to that Dahmer nigger for me? It's sure going to take the pressure off me in Washington."

"He (Bowers) really seemed happy that Dahmer had been killed," Wilson testified.

Under crossexamination, Wilson stated he had received $1,600 from "different agents of the FBI" in return for his information.

Wilson testified in an unrelated trial in 1968 he began selling information to the FBI in February, 1966, when he decided the agents suspected him of Klan activities. He said he joined the Ku Klux Klan in 1965 and became grand giant, or state secretary-treasurer.

Defense attorneys objected vigorously before Wilson's testimony that they had not had an opportunity to question the surprise witness before he was called. Judge Stanton Hall granted a request for a private conference in an adjacent room but stipulated two deputy sheriffs would be present.

Wilson had not testified in previous trials stemming from the attack on the Dahmer home or the alleged conspiracy which preceded the attack. He was called as a state witness, however, in 1968 in the Circuit Court trial of J. L. Harper, a Jackson housepainter charged in the bombing of Blackwell Realty Co. of Jackson.

The state charges Dahmer's death was the result of a well rehearsed and carefully planned plot spurred by Bowers. Two earlier state trials for the Laurel vending machine operator ended in mistrials as did a federal conspiracy trial.